

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6329

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TAGS: SOPN, US, NI, SL

SUBJ: DAILY MAIL VIEW OF GEN. OBASANJO U.S. VISIT

1. FREETOWN "DAILY MAIL" OF THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, CARRIES FOLLOWING EDITORIAL ON NIGERIAN HEAD OF STATE VISIT TO U.S. HEADLINED "OBASANJO IS PLAYING FOR HIGH STAKES":

A. "WHEN LT. GENERAL OLUSEGUN OBASANJO SPEAKS HE IS SPEAKING FOR NEARLY EIGHTY MILLION NIGERIANS AND THEREFORE A QUARTER OF THE ENTIRE AFRICAN POPULATION. AS SUCH, THE PRONOUNCEMENTS OF THE NIGERIAN HEAD OF STATE IN WASHINGTON THIS WEEK ARE BEING TAKEN IN AMERICAN AND INTERNATIONAL CIRCLES AS SIGNIFICANTLY REPRESENTATIVE OF AN IMPORTANT PORTION OF BLACK AFRICA.

B. IN FACT, WITH THE NEW LEADERSHIP ROLE NIGERIA IS PLAYING IN AFRICAN INTER-POLITICS, IT CAN BE REASONABLY ARGUED THAT GEN. OBASANJO IS CURRENTLY REPRESENTING THE ENTIRE AFRICAN CONTINENT IN WASHINGTON'S CORRIDORS OF POWER AND THAT WHEN HE ADDRESSES THE UNITED NATIONS HE WILL BE SPEAKING AS AN AFRICAN EMISSARY RATHER THAN A NIGERIAN.

C. IN HIS TWO DAYS OF TALKS WITH U.S. PRESIDENT CARTER, GENERAL OBASANJO PUT A LOT OF EMPHASIS ON THE RHODESIAN ISSUE
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AND THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN SITUATION.

D. CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT A VOLATILE PART OF THE PRESS MEDIA AT HOME HAD CRITICISED THE STATE VISIT, WHATEVER IS ACHIEVED IN TERMS OF AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION TO A SOLUTION IN ZIMBABWE AND NAMIBIA, WILL BE OF EVEN MORE CREDIT TO THE NIGERIAN REGIME.

E. THE OPPOSITION TO THE VISIT FROM HOME WAS NOT UNEXPECTED.
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE USA AND NIGERIA HAVE NOT BEEN EXACTLY
WARM SINCE THE ALLEGATIONS OF AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN NIGERIA
INTERNAL POLITICS DURING MURTALA MOHAMMED'S PERIOD.

F. THE OBASANJO ERA IS A CONTINUATION OF THE MURTALA
MOHAMMED GOVERNMENT AND POLICIES AND CERTAIN CRITICS CERTAINLY
BELIEVE THAT THE COLD FROWNS SHOWN WASHINGTON SHOULD CONTINUE.

G. THIS IS WHY, THE LIEUTENANT GENERAL NOW FINDS THE STAKES
HE IS PLAYING FOR INCREASINGLY HIGHER.

H. THE ENTIRE VISIT HAS TO BE A SUCCESS FOR HIM. IT ALSO HAS
TO BE A SUCCESS FOR JIMMY CARTER WHO WILL BE MAKING A RE-
CIPROCAL VISIT TO THE NIGERIAN CAPITAL, ON NOVEMBER 25.

I. THE FANFARES, THE WINING AND DINING ARE ALL PREDICTABLE
PARAPHERNALIA.

J. IT IS
WHEN THE FORMER COLD LOOKS TURN TO WAR SMILES ALL

ROUND THAT BOTH OLUSEGUN AND JIMMY CAN BEGIN TO SAY 'WELL
DONE BROTHER'. THEN BOTH LEADERS COULD COOPERATE TOWARDS
THE EQUAL RIGHTS AND JUSTICE WHICH THE NIGERIANS AND ALL
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AFRICANS ARE FIGHTING FOR IN THEIR CONTINENT".
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